

HNRS 204 Truth Spring 21

See the Welcome page for office hours—we'd be happy to talk with you!

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Honors 204 aims to help students explore questions about the nature of truth, how we can best discover it, what is its value, and what are its limits. We will use ideas and methods from philosophy, religion, cosmology, logic, literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology and other disciplines to make sense of these questions. Ultimately, the primary goal is to make students better thinkers through explicit discussion of logic and critical thinking strategies, as well active exploration of significant texts and ideas from a variety of times and places.

Course material will be organized into four historical eras/themes:

- (1) **Thought:** The Ancient World
- (2) **Faith:** The Abrahamic Traditions
- (3) **Experience:** The Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment
- (4) **Society:** The Post-Modern World

In examining each of these eras we will consider constellations of questions and answers characteristic of specific times and places, but we will also use contemporary tools of logic and critical thinking to engage them.

This course is a lower division wildcard for General Education (GE), meeting the goals for Critical Thinking (A3), Humanities (C2), Social Sciences (D1 and D2), and Lifelong Learning (E). You may use this course to satisfy one of those requirements. You do not need to decide now which requirement it will satisfy. The following GE Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) will be especially promoted in this course:

- **Active Enquiry** will be promoted through in-class activities and discussion, and take-home exercises that require students to evaluate arguments.
- **Written Communication** will be promoted through the written exercises and written examinations.
- **Critical Thinking** will be promoted throughout the course through the introduction of a variety of views about truth that often conflict with standard views as well as each other. Students will be asked to assess these views in both class discussion and written assignments. Moreover, there will be emphasis on techniques of logical reasoning and common errors.
- **Global Engagement** will be promoted through the substantial coverage of east Asian and Islamic thought concerning truth and knowledge, as well as discussion of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This course has been approved for the following pathways: Food Studies; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Global Development Studies; Great Books and Ideas; International Studies; Science, Technology and Values; and Sustainability Studies. In addition, the course satisfies the Global Cultures requirement.

Course Materials

Two required texts are available at the Wildcat Store:

- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell
- *The Other Shore: A New Translation of the Heart Sutra with Commentaries*, by Thich Nhat Hanh (ISBN: 9871941529140)

While you will need to buy *The Other Shore*, *1984* is available for free online. Nevertheless, you may wish to purchase the paperback since it is a lengthy novel. All other course readings will be available online in pdf or html formats. Each set of readings for a week can be found in the folder associated with that week of the course.

Course Requirements

Reading assignments: None of the readings will come from a textbook. Most will be texts that have had a significant role in the history of ideas or represent important developments. Many of these readings will be difficult to read, both because the language and ideas will be unfamiliar and dense, and because the readings will be drawn from larger works and context with which you will not be familiar. Expect the reading assignments to take a fair bit of time and concentration. Do not be disheartened by the difficulty! One of the important skills you will develop this semester is the ability to make sense out of difficult ideas and texts. **Each substantial reading assignment will be given for an entire week, and it will be expected that you will have done the reading by the Tuesday of each week.** Occasionally, short readings may be added for Thursdays.

Multiple-choice quizzes: Usually on Tuesdays, you will take a multiple-choice quiz on the reading for the week. Under the numbered week, the quiz will become available at 3:30 and will be due by 3:45 when we begin class discussion over Zoom.

Discussion board quizzes: Usually on Thursdays, you will take a quiz on the reading for the week by posting a thread in response to a discussion forum prompt and then replying to a classmate. Under the numbered week, the quiz will become available at 3:30 and will be due by 3:45 when we begin class discussion over Zoom.

Exercises: Most weeks, there will be an exercise due on Tuesday by 3:30. See “Instructions for Weekly Exercises” on the Welcome page for the details.

Participation: Participation includes coming to class through Zoom and being prepared to talk about ideas, ask questions, listen respectfully, and try out new ways of thinking with your classmates and faculty. When you’re present, have your video on unless there is a technical

problem that makes this impossible. Also, we will consider your participation on the discussion board when grading participation at the end of the semester.

Midterm exam: There will be one midterm in the seventh week of the semester.

Final exam: There will be a cumulative final exam during finals week.

Grading

Multiple-choice quizzes 20%

Discussion board quizzes 20%

Exercises 25%

Participation 10%

Midterm exam 10%

Final exam 15%

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Your commitment to learning and CSU, Chico's Academic Integrity Policy require you to be honest in all your academic coursework. The policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct is at <http://www.csuchico.edu.sjd/integrity.shtml>.

Computer problems: Please alert us of any computer troubles through email. If the problem is something we can fix, we will want to address it quickly. If the problem requires an expert, call IT Support Services at 530-898-4357 or email itss@csuchico.edu

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please talk with ARC (Accessibility Resource Center) as soon as possible. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the ARC Office to establish a record of their disability. Disability Support Services are at 530-898-5959 or arcdept@csuchico.edu

Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting: As instructors one of our responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. We hope you will feel able to share your life experiences. We will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, we are required to share information regarding sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking with the university. Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting the Counseling and Wellness Center (530-898- 6345) or Safe Place (530-898-3030). Information on campus reporting obligations and other Title IX related resources are available here: www.csuchio.edu/title-ix

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Thought

Week 2: *Republic* (VI-VII selections) by Plato, *Metaphysics* (IV, Parts 1, 3, 5-8) by Aristotle

Week 3: *Zhuangzi* Chapters 2, 3, 17 selections

Week 4: *The Other Shore* by Thich Nhat Hanh

Faith

Week 5: *Ecclesiastes*, *Gospel of John*, *Romans* Chapters 1-5, 9-11

Week 6: *Quran* 2:1-9, *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Introduction, Chapter XVII) by Al-Ghazali, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (selection) by Ibn Rushd

Week 7: *Othello* by Shakespeare, **midterm exam on Thursday**

Experience

Week 8: “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina” by Galileo, *Meditations on First Philosophy* 1 & 2 by Descartes

Week 9: *Novum Organum* (Book 1 Preface, Aphorisms 1-44) by Bacon, “Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy” and “General Scholium” by Newton

Week 10: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Sections IV, X) by Hume, *Novum Organon Renovatum* (Chapter V) by Whewell

Society

Week 11: “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” by Nietzsche, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Chapters 1, 2, 6 selections) by Evans-Pritchard

Week 12: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Parts One and Two by Orwell

Week 13: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Part Three by Orwell, “Truth and Politics” by Arendt

Week 14: *The Invisible Gorilla* Chapters 1, 4, 5 by Chabris and Simons

Week 15: *No Future Without Forgiveness* Chapters 1-2 by Tutu

Week 16: **Final exam**

*Although details of the course may be revised as we go along, we will let you know as soon as we can of any changes.